

Decisions,



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As you approach graduation, you're probably getting asked what you're going to do with your life. Are you going to college? Getting a job? Like most decisions, it's easiest to take one step at a time. The guide below will help you start thinking about what you want, or don't want, to do.

1. Explore options. Before making a decision, you need to know your options. Read about some options — like [apprenticeship](#), [higher education](#), [work](#), and [military](#) — right here in this paper. But, don't limit yourself. Research volunteer work, traveling and other ideas you have about what you'd like to do.

2. Prioritize. Think about what's important to you, or what your priorities are. If job experience or earning a paycheck is important to you, think about getting a job after graduation. If you're looking for a balance between work and school, consider an apprenticeship. Record your future goals in a portfolio. As you explore options, see if they match your priorities.

3. Ask others. How did other people decide about their future? Ask your family, friends, counselor or teachers about the decisions they made

after high school. How did they choose? Would they make the same choice again? Why or why not?

4. Stay calm. It's all right to change your mind. And you're not limited to one option. Many people work before going to college. Others spend time volunteering before starting a career. If you start considering your options now, it'll be easier to make a decision later.

Choose your classes carefully. Everyone — regardless of their future path — must think about high school classes. High school classes are not only important for college! You need certain skills to succeed in life. Today's workplace demands a level of skill gained in part through challenging high school coursework. You need to express yourself clearly when speaking and writing. You

need to understand what you read and solve problems with math or logic. And you should be comfortable with computers. Below are recommended high school subjects and the recommended number of

years. These may very well be **different** from your high school's graduation requirements so you should be sure to check with your own guidance office when scheduling classes.

Subject	Recommended Years	Why is it important?
English	4	Helps you develop communication skills needed for any type of job and everyday life.
Science	3	Provides an understanding of nature and helps develop objective thinking.
Math	3-4	Important requirement for entrance into many college programs - not just math and technology.
Social Science	2-3	Increases your awareness of how society and government interact and affect your life.
World Language	2	Strengthens your understanding of English and increases your awareness of other cultures.

Many high school classes are required for acceptance into college. Some colleges recommend additional classes in visual or performing arts, computers, history or geography. Specific requirements differ for each college. If you're thinking about continuing your education, make sure you understand the requirements while you're still in high school and can take additional classes.

"A career is the sum total of all the work--paid or unpaid--you have done and will do in a lifetime."

Anonymous

Planning Your Career and Don't Know Where to Start?

There are many sources of information just waiting for you. Whether you are looking for information on career planning, counseling, training, education, or financial aid, there are resources available. Here is a list to get you started.

Personal Contacts. The people closest to you--family and friends--can be extremely helpful in providing career information. While in high school you make friends with many people, whether as a member of a sports team or the honor society or a particular class. Talk to your family and your friends. They can provide a wealth of information. This kind of personal connection is called *networking*. These people may be able to answer your questions directly or they may be able to put you in touch with someone else who can. Networking can be an effective way to learn the type of training necessary for a certain position. You could also find out how someone in a particular position entered the field, what the prospects for advancement are, and what the

person likes or dislikes about the work.

Public Libraries, career centers, and guidance offices. These institutions maintain a great deal of up-to-date material. To begin your library search, look at the computer listings under "vocations" or "careers" and then under more specific fields. Check the periodicals section, where trade and professional magazines and journals about specific occupations and industries are located. Check your school's career centers for resources such as:

- individual counseling and testing;
- guest speakers, field trips, books;
- career magazines; and
- career days.

Counselors. These professionals are trained to help you discover your strengths and weaknesses, evaluate your goals and values, and help you determine what you would like in a career. Counselors will not tell you what to do. They may, however, administer interest inventories and aptitude tests, interpret the results, and help you explore various options. Counselors also may discuss local job markets and the entry requirements and costs of schools, colleges, or training programs.

Internet. Most companies, professional societies, academic institutions, and government agencies now maintain a web site. Occupational and industry data, career counseling, and financial aid

information are just a small sampling of what's available. "The world awaits you" when you log on to the world wide web.

Professional societies, trade associations, labor unions, business firms, and educational institutions. These organizations provide a variety of free or inexpensive career material. Many of these are listed in an additional information section in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook 2002-2003 (OOH)*, developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The complete OOH is available on-line at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>.

Occupational Outlook Handbook 2002-2003, Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Dept. of Labor